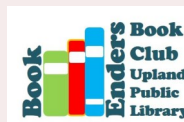


Book-Enders Book Club Newsletter

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THIS MONTH

"The Red Tent" by
Anita Diamant

ON "THE RED TENT"

This month's book is Anita Diamant's *The Red Tent*. The book focuses on the story of Dinah and further dives into the traditions of womanhood in biblical times.

Those that are familiar with the Bible will notice some familiar names and characters associated with Dinah, such as her mother Leah, her aunt Rachel, their handmaids Zilpah, and Bilhah, and her father Jacob

and his brother Joseph. Since the book's release in 1997, it has

where Dinah is mentioned. It is also regarded for essentially celebrating mothers and daughters and the endurance of womanhood.

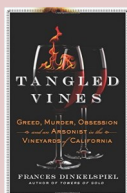
The book has been adapted in a mini-series in 2014 and was shown on the Lifetime network. The series featured Rebecca Ferguson as Dinah, Minnie Driver as Leah, and Iain Glen as Jacob.



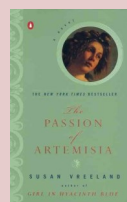
Rebecca Ferguson as Dinah in the
Lifetime mini-series

been widely praised for highlighting the silent female characters in the book of Genesis,

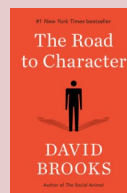
BOOKING AHEAD



January
Tangled Vines
Frances Dinkelspiel



February
The Passion of Artemisia
Susan Vreeland



March
The Road to Character
David Brooks

NOVEMBER BOOK-ENDERS MEETING WRAP UP

At the November Book-Enders' meeting, Dr. Andrea Labinger led a thoughtful discussion of Liliana Heker's book, *The End of the Story*. She described the challenges she faced translating the novel, addressed the confusing chronology of the story, and the ambiguity of the perspectives of the main characters, Diana Glass, Leonora Ordaz, and Hertha Bechnofen. Thanks to Dr. Labinger's expert knowledge of Latin American literature and culture, Book-Enders learned more about

Argentina's dirty war, the Montoneros, and what life was like in Argentina under the military dictatorship of the 1970s.

For further reading about Dr. Labinger's translation of the Liliana Heker novel, please refer to her article published in the 91st *Meridian*, an online publication for the International Writing Program at the University of Iowa.

<https://iwp.uiowa.edu/91st/vol5-num1/to-what-end-translating-liliana-hekers-el-fin-de-la-historia-and-related-narratives>

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: ANITA DIAMANT

Diamant was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1951, grew up in Newark, New Jersey until she was twelve years old when her family moved to Denver, Colorado. She graduated from Washington University in St. Louis with a degree in comparative literature and earned a Master's in American literature from Binghamton University in upstate New York.

In 1975, she moved to Boston and began a career in journalism, writing for local magazines and newspapers, including the Boston Phoenix, the Boston Globe, and Boston Magazine. She branched out into regional and national media: New England Monthly, Yankee, Self, Parenting, Parents, McCall's, and Ms. Her feature stories and columns covered a wide variety of topics, from profiles of prominent people and stories about medical ethics, to first-person essays about everything from politics to popular culture to pet ownership to food.

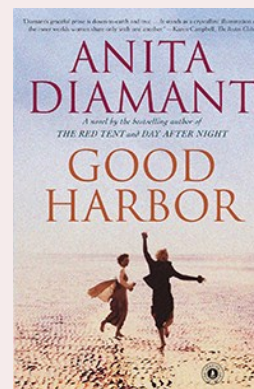
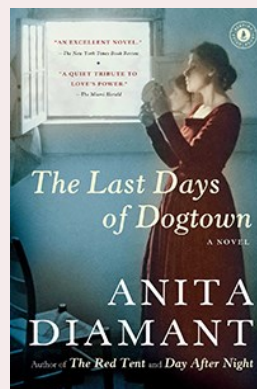
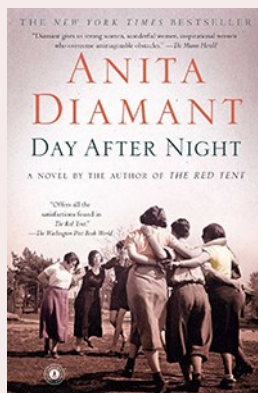


Anita Diamant
Photo Credit: Gretje Fergeson

In 1997, Diamant published her first work of fiction. Inspired by a few lines from Genesis, *The Red Tent* tells the story an obscure and overlooked character named Dinah, the only daughter of Jacob and Leah. *The Red Tent* became a word-of-mouth bestseller thanks to reader recommendations, book groups, and support from independent bookstores. In 2001, the Independent Booksellers Alliance honored *The Red Tent* as the "Booksense Best Fiction" of the year. *The Red Tent* has been published in more than 25 countries world wide, including Australia, England, Finland, France, Germany, Holland, Israel, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. In 2014, the novel was adapted as a two-part, four-hour miniseries by Lifetime TV.

Her new work of fiction is *The Boston Girl*. Addie Baum is that Boston girl, born in 1900 to immigrant parents who were unprepared for and suspicious of America and its effect on their three daughters. Addie's intelligence and curiosity take her to a world her parents can't imagine—a world of short skirts, movies, celebrity culture, and new opportunities for women; a world where women finish high school, go to college, have a career, and find true love. *The Boston Girl* begins when Addie's twenty-two year old granddaughter asks, "How did you get to be the woman you are today?"

Source: <http://anitadiamant.com/bio/biography/>



ABOUT THIS MONTH'S SPEAKER: MARILYN LUBARSKY

Marilyn Lubarsky taught Social Studies at Upland High School in Southern California for twenty-eight years and also taught methods classes in the Teacher Preparation Program at Cal Poly, Pomona, where she was a lecturer for more than a decade. She earned a Bachelor's degree in history from Scripps College in Claremont, California, a teaching credential from Cal Poly Pomona, a certificate in Gifted and Talented Education from the University of California at Riverside, and a CLAD credential. In 2008, she was named Outstanding High School Social Studies Teacher by the California Council for the Social Studies. She was awarded a Fulbright-Hay Scholarship to study in India in 1991, and in Poland in 2009. She is also a fellow of the National Endowment in the

Humanities, studying at Fordham University in 1990, and at NYU in 2000. She and her students were featured in a film on teaching about the Holocaust, produced by the Shoah Foundation at USC, in 2009. She was a Regional Museum Educator and is a teacher fellow of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC. She is a consultant to Priscilla Wu and Associates. Students whom she has counseled have been admitted to Harvard, Stanford, UCLA, Berkeley, Princeton, and other top tier undergraduate schools, dental, medical and law schools as well as military academies and engineering programs.

THE SOCIAL STATUS OF WOMEN IN ANCIENT EGYPT & MESOPOTAMIA

by Keith Noonan

Egyptian women commanded more power than women in many other ancient societies.

The roles of women differed greatly among the ancient societies of Egypt and Mesopotamia, whose territories make up what is now Iraq and parts of Iran, Turkey and Syria. For the most part, ancient women in Egypt enjoyed more rights and privileges than their Mesopotamian counterparts in matters of marriage and property ownership.

Women's Legal Rights in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptian legal rights extended to women in most situations, which made the nation's societal structure more egalitarian than most others of the time. Like men, women could buy, sell and manage property. They had ownership rights and could acquire commodities such as livestock, money, goods, slaves and servants. Egyptian women could work outside of the home and build wealth. They would inherit a third of their husband's estate in the event of his death. The structure of ancient Egyptian society also gave women the right to sue and play an active role in legal proceedings.

Women's Legal Rights in Ancient Mesopotamia

Women could not exercise much personal sovereignty in ancient Mesopotamia. The social structure defined women in relation to their families. Society viewed a woman as her father's daughter or her husband's wife -- and not as an autonomous individual. Royal women or those from rich and powerful families enjoyed a greater degree of personal autonomy, in some cases. Mesopotamian women would not inherit their husband's estate if there were eligible male heirs. Women did not often work outside of the house, but some held jobs selling wares they had created or worked as tavern keepers. The 18th century introduction of the Code of Hammurabi gave women the ability to divorce and own property under certain circumstances, even though the code also treated women as property.

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BOOKS SIMILAR TO "THE RED TENT"

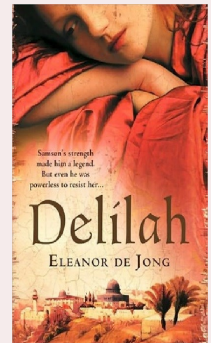


The Testament of Mary by Colm Toibín

If you want a book like 'The Red Tent', then you've found it. Sticking with the Biblical theme, this is the story of the most famous woman of them all. Taking place years after the death of Jesus on the cross, Mary lives alone with her grief at the loss of her son. Was her son the performer of miracles, or was he simply her son? All Mary can see is the boy she loved and lost. And then two men turn up at her door, wanting her to relive his last day in order to tell it to the world.

Delilah by Eleanor De Jong

The Philistines and Israelites are at war. When Delilah's stepfather offers her as a wife to the Israelite warrior Samson, she is unimpressed. But then, the chief Philistine enlists her to help bring Samson down, so she seduces him, and in doing so, connects not only with him but with her Israelite heritage. As a result, she finds herself torn in two.



The Dovekeepers by Alice Hoffman

It's 70 A.D., and in the Judean desert on the mountain of Masada nearly one thousand Jews are under attack by Roman armies. Hoffman has created four women, each with her own story to tell, who end up enduring the siege. What they have in common is that they are all dovekeepers and form their own mini-community tending to the doves of Masada. A story packed with historical detail, Hoffman allows you to climb right inside the experience through this four, very different, women.

Source: Jo Gray, <http://itcher.com/mag/books-like-the-red-tent/>



MAP OF THE OLD TESTAMENT WORLD

CANAAN AND ANCIENT ISRAEL

Little information survives about specific individuals in the Bronze and Iron Ages except in the Bible. Portraits, private letters and diaries are non-existent and biographical statements belong only to kings.

Most people were identified by a single name, used in combination with their father's name when specificity was important. Names were often theophoric -- including the name of a god or goddess within them.

The societies of the Bronze and Iron Age southern Levant were patriarchal and gender was an important factor in shaping the opportunities and social roles of the individual. In art and literature, women were portrayed as mothers and objects of desire, but also as warriors and priestesses. Interpreting evidence for the role of women in ancient society is difficult, since the evidence itself may be a product of the interests and priorities of men.

Archaeology has revealed some information on the manner in which Canaanites and Israelites would adorn themselves. It is apparent that both women and men wore make-up and jewelry. Kohl, a black eye-paint derived from antimony, was the most common cosmetic product. Make-up was applied by means of a stick or small spoon and stored in shallow bowls. Men and wom-

en alike would scent themselves with perfumed oils.

Clothing was a principal indication of status. In Egyptian art, Canaanite nobles are shown wearing elaborately patterned woven clothing.

In the Iron Age, fringed garments were associated with special status. Elite clothing was often multi-layered and



required fasteners. Toggle pins were used until the later Iron Age when fibulae, an ancient version of the safety pin, spread across the Near East. Both Canaanites and Israelites wore a frontlet, or headband, on the forehead. Men and women typically worked from sunrise to sundown, perhaps taking a siesta in the hottest part of the afternoon. Leisure time would be spent in storytelling, music and dance. Games involving moving pieces across a board according to the roll of dice were popular.

Source: <http://www.penn.museum/sites/Canaan/PersonalIdentity.html>

Continued from Page 3

Marriage for Women in Ancient Egypt

The government played a very small role in marriages in ancient Egyptian civilization, even though Egyptian society viewed marriage as a duty. The lack of state involvement in marital affairs meant that the circumstances and social standards of individual unions varied a good deal across classes and geographical areas. Egyptian law granted women the right to initiate and carry out divorces. Men sometimes gave gifts to the father of the woman they wished to marry in a manner that could be interpreted as purchasing her for marriage, but this dowry practice did not extend to all Egyptian marriages. Women retained ownership of their property upon entering into a marriage. Egyptian women usually did not enter a marriage until after menstruation had begun.

Marriage for Women in Ancient Mesopotamia

In ancient Mesopotamian, women were considered ready for a family-arranged marriage soon after they reached puberty. Mesopotamian women did not marry individuals; rather, they married into their husbands' families. The groom's father exercised considerable power in Mesopotamian marriages. For example, he could give the bride to one of the groom's brothers in the event of the groom's death or dissatisfaction with the marriage. The groom's family paid a dowry in most marriages, and Mesopotamian society viewed this as a payment for the groom's right to the bride. Husbands had the power to manage marital assets.



Source: <http://classroom.synonym.com/social-status-women-ancient-egypt-mesopotamia-23631.html>

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the marital dynamics of Jacob's family. He has four wives; compare his relationship with each woman?
2. What do you make of the relationships among the four wives?
3. Dinah is rich in "mothers." Discuss the differences or similarities in her relationship with each woman.
4. Childbearing and childbirth are central to The Red Tent. How do the fertility childbearing and birthing practices differ from contemporary life? How are they similar? How do they compare with your own experiences as a mother or father?
5. Discuss Jacob's role as a father. Does he treat Dinah differently from his sons? Does he feel differently about her? If so, how?
6. Discuss Dinah's twelve brothers. Discuss their relationships with each other, with Dinah, and with Jacob and his four wives. Are they a close family?
7. Female relationships figure largely in The Red Tent. Discuss the importance of Inna, Tabea, Werenro, and Meryt.
8. In the novel, Rebecca is presented as an Oracle. Goddesses are venerated along with gods. What do you think of this culture, in which the Feminine has not yet been totally divorced from the Divine? How does El, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, fit into this?
9. Dinah's point of view is often one of an outsider, an observer. What effect does this have on the narrative? What effect does this have on the reader?
10. The book travels from Haran (contemporary Iraq/Syria), through Canaan and into Shechem (Israel), and into Egypt. What strikes you about the cultural differences Dinah encounters vis-a-vis food, clothing, work, and male-female relationships.
11. In The Red Tent, we see Dinah grow from childhood to old age. Discuss how she changes and matures. What lessons does she learn from life? If you had to pick a single word to describe the sum of her life, what word would you choose? How would Dinah describe her own life experience?

(Questions issued by publisher.)